

Report Title: **Cricket Club Proposals**

Report of: **Mark Evison, Park Manager, Alexandra Palace Charitable Trust**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To consider the proposals for the improvement of the cricket clubhouse, drainage of the grounds and construction of an all-weather practice area.
- 1.2 To consider the request for a new lease of the cricket ground to allow sub-letting by the Alexandra Park Club to the Heartlands High School.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Board considers the advice of the Alexandra Park and Palace Advisory Committee and decide whether to accept or reject that advice.
- 2.2 That the Board decide whether to grant permission for Phase 1 of the development, subject to planning permission and,
- 2.3 That the Board agree to the Alexandra Park Club sub-letting to Heartlands High School, by the mechanism of a surrender of the existing lease and grant of a new one.
- 2.4 That the Board delegates to the Interim General Manager, authority to agree final terms for the new Lease to Alexandra Park Club and that the agreement is subject to a satisfactory section 36 Charities Act report, which will be reported to the Board in due course.
- 2.5 That the London Borough of Haringey's Head of Legal Services be authorised by the Board as Trustees to seal the finalised Lease.
- 2.6 That the Board note that with regard to Phase 2, the Building Schools for the Future team will carry out further consultation with local residents and undertake appropriate wildlife and habitat surveys before requesting formal permission.

Report Authorised by: **Andrew Gill, Interim General Manager**.....

Contact Officer: **Mark Evison, Park Manager,**  
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### **3. Executive Summary**

- 3.1 Heartlands High School and the Alexandra Park Club wish to enter an agreement to jointly use the clubhouse and pitches. However, sub-letting is prohibited by the current lease.
- 3.2 The proposal includes modifying the indoor and outdoor facilities in two phases. The first of which comprises alterations to the toilets and access routes to the clubhouse and drainage works on the football pitches. The second phase is to construct an all-weather practice area.
- 3.3 The members of the Advisory and Consultative Committees have been consulted on the proposals, some of which will require planning permission.
- 3.4 A new lease could be the mechanism to allow the club to enter into an agreement with the school, and to permit the proposed improvement works.

### **4. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)**

N/A

### **5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

N/A

### **6. Background**

- 6.1 The Heartlands High School (HHS) requires access to playing fields for its pupils. The facilities leased to the Alexandra Park Club (AP Club) were identified by Haringey Council's *Building Schools for the Future* team (BSF) as a suitable location. The primary objective of BSF is to provide HHS with access to playing fields.
- 6.2 The school benefits from these proposals as it will be able to fully deliver the curriculum. In addition, Haringey Council can fulfil the requirements of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The AP Club and the Trust will benefit from the capital investment. In considering this report the Board must consider the issues exclusively in the best interests of the charity and should not have any regard to the needs of school.
- 6.3 The following practical issues have been identified by BSF and HHS. They have been divided into two phases according to the work required to overcome each issue.
- Phase 1:**
- The grass pitches are unplayable for significant parts of the year due to water-logging
  - The internal layout of the building is currently unsuitable for school use, as the only access to the female toilets is through the bar area.
  - The entrance/exit routes are unsuitable and adaptations will be required to improve accessibility
- Phase 2**
- An all-weather practice area is required so the school can train without wear and tear on the grass areas during extremes of weather and to reduce the need for the club's members to travel to alternative training venues. This facility will require floodlighting to fulfil the requirements of the Football Foundation (a major funding partner in this project).

## **7. Alexandra Park Club**

- 7.1 The Alexandra Park Club have been a tenant at the palace since the 1900s, they are currently very successful with many football and cricket teams. The Youth Football Club recently won 'Best Club' at Haringey's *Celebrating Sports Awards*.
- 7.2 Currently the club spends a lot of money hiring training facilities off-site and transporting players back and forth, because the poor condition of the pitches does not allow them to train on-site. They are also unable to train after dark. The phase 2 proposals will bring the teams back to the ground for training which will help to foster a club spirit and help improve the club's financial position.
- 7.3 In the past, the cricket ground was home to many more facilities than today. A map drafted in 1945 shows that the grounds contained three pavilions, a tea house, and both grass and hard tennis courts.

## **8. Lease Issues**

- 8.1 The AP Club is approximately halfway through a lease term of 20 years. Appendix 1 shows the location of grounds within the context of the park.
- 8.2 The proposals described later in this report rely entirely on the Board agreeing to a new lease along the following key terms:
- That the current lease is surrendered
  - That a new lease is agreed that permits the Alexandra Park Club to sub-let the facilities (the grounds and building) to Heartlands High School
  - That the rent be reviewed at the appropriate time to consider the benefit of any enhancements
- 8.3 The proposed use by HHS does not conflict with the current provisions of the lease as the grounds are to be used "as a sports club for cricket & football and ancillary sports and social purposes". However, the lease specifically prohibits sub-letting and the tenant must not "make any alteration to the Demised Premises without prior written consent of the Landlord."
- 8.4 Part of the proposed location for the all-weather practice area is outside the current demise on part of the area known as the cricket scrub. This was surrendered by the AP Club in June 2009. By agreeing to a new lease any boundary issues would be tidied up.

## **9. Impact on the park**

- 9.1 The Board will be aware the park is protected by a number of designations as well as a maintenance agreement with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The impact of the proposals has been considered against these designations in the table overleaf.

| Designation or issue  | Impact   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Conservation Area (CA)</b><br/>           In 1979 the Palace &amp; Park was designated a conservation area. This is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.</p> <p>The Council’s Core Strategy (submitted in March 2011) includes a policy that relates to views, namely:<br/>           “The Council will seek to protect locally important views that contribute to the interest and character of the borough. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of and from large parks and open spaces, such as Alexandra Palace and Finsbury Park;</li> <li>• Views into and from Conservation Areas”</li> </ul> | <p>Planning permission will be required for the all-weather practice area and for the external access alterations proposed for the club house. Any trees on site with a diameter &gt;7.5cm are protected by this designation, and works require prior approval by the local authority. In relation to the fencing around the all-weather practice area, the Board will recall that the recent application for the extension to the deer enclosure fencing was approved. The all-weather practice area will be located against a bank of trees on two sides so it will not affect any open views across the old race course. Some opponents of the recent <i>Adizone</i> proposal suggested this very location as an alternative.</p> <p>The Board may also consider whether the BSF team should obtain planning permission prior to requesting approval for Phase 2.</p> |
| <p><b>Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)</b><br/>           The whole of the Park, including the Garden Centre and allotments, is designated as MOL. It is ultimately the planning authority who determines whether a proposal on MOL is inappropriate.</p> <p>However, the Board is reminded that criticism has been levelled previously where a proposal has been agreed “subject to planning permission.”</p>  | <p>MOL is designated for its value for leisure, recreation, sport, art and cultural activities as well as nature conservation or habitat interest.</p> <p>The Board will need to consider the balance between the benefits for recreation (part of the Board’s Mission) and the impacts on the adjacent habitat.</p> <p>The Board may wish to add a requirement for the project to provide replacement planting, screening or other habitat improvement works.</p>   |
| <p><b>Metropolitan Park</b><br/>           The park is designated as a “Metropolitan Park” by the Local Authority. This type of open space is typically 60 hectares or greater (Alexandra Park is 79 ha)<br/>           Either i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland etc, or ii) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields, but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits. Adequate car parking.</p>  | <p>The proposals provide for further active recreation and the impact is similar to that on MOL, as above.</p>   |
| <p><b>Nature Conservation</b><br/>           The Nature Conservation area at Alexandra Palace Park is designated as “An Ecologically Valuable Site of Borough Importance”.</p> <p>Haringey Borough’s Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) recognises the importance of the site and recommends that it is declared a Local Nature Reserve.</p>  | <p>The proposals could have an effect on the wildlife of the site. The BSF team have consulted with the borough’s nature conservation officer who has requested a general habitat surveys and specific monitoring of bat activity.</p> <p>Consultees have raised concerns over potential destruction of certain trees. As mentioned above, a requirement on the BSF project to provide replacement planting, screening or other habitat works could be recommended by the Board. The requirement could include planting which contributes to the targets in the BAP.</p>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Historic Parks &amp; Gardens</b></p> <p>The park is listed as Grade II on the English Heritage “Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England”</p> <p>Grade II sites are generally those with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact, the degree of required special interest rising as the site becomes closer in time.</p> <p>The following advice is from the website of the Parks and Gardens Data Service, copyright 2007:</p> <p>Although being included on the <i>Register</i> does not in itself bring additional statutory controls over a park or garden, local authorities are required by central government to provide for the protection of the historic environment in their policies and their allocation of resources. Planners must take registration into consideration when making decisions. Where an application for development would affect a registered park or garden, local planning authorities must take into account the historic interest of the site when deciding whether or not to grant permission.</p> <p>The Garden History Society is consulted on all applications affecting registered sites, regardless of the grade of the site.</p> <p>Local authorities are also charged with protecting registered parks and gardens when preparing development plans for their area (Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, 1.6; 2.1).</p> <p>As a result, most Local Plans now contain policies to help safeguard the historic parks and gardens which lie within the area covered. These usually stress in particular those sites included in the national <i>Register</i>, while the best plans also cover parks and gardens of more local interest.</p> | <p>The proposals will not adversely affect the Heritage of the park.</p> <p>In fact, the park has lost a great many facilities and features over the years. The site identified for the all-weather practice area was formerly occupied by hard tennis courts and a tennis pavilion (one of four buildings on the ground at that time).</p>   |
| <p><b>Heritage Lottery Fund</b></p> <p>Maintenance and management contract and Park Management Plan.</p> <p>Officers meet with the Senior Grants Officer when necessary to discuss the maintenance and proposed developments within the park.</p>   | <p>There was no investment at the cricket ground as part of the HLF project and therefore the proposals do not conflict with the maintenance and management agreements. Notably, the proposal will not intrude on the view from the palace which the HLF were keen to see re-opened and maintained.</p>   |
| <p><b>Safety and Access</b></p> <p>The Park Manager’s general comments on the effect of the proposal on safety and access issues.</p>   | <p>Increased use of any park improves personal safety and reduces the perception of crime. It is well established that positive popular activities ‘crowd out crime’.</p> <p>Undoubtedly the increased use will also result in the increase of vehicular and foot traffic to the ground. However, the extra use proposed by the school will be programmed around the AP Club’s needs and will largely take place on weekdays during school term time. In other words, the facility will used at times when it is currently empty.</p> |

## **10. Policy**

- 10.1 The proposed use fits with the Board's newly adopted mission and vision statements:

From the mission "...place of public resort and recreation..."

From the vision "...sustainable asset for all including local community...".

## **11. Consultation**

- 11.1 The BSF Team have presented details of the proposals to the Advisory Committee (AC) and Consultative Committee (CC) on two occasions. The first was a site visit which was attended by eight committee members, the second was the Joint Informal Meeting of the AC and CC on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011.
- 11.2 The presentation at the meeting was to fulfil the duties under Paragraph 1, section 19 of the Alexandra Park and Palace Act to consult the Advisory Committee on
- (v) any proposals which require planning permission and
  - (vii) furtherance of recreation and leisure in the Alexandra Park and Palace.
- 11.3 The draft resolutions from the meeting are as follows, and their comments are also reported separately to this meeting:
- i. That the Committees generally supported Phase 1 of the proposals to improve facilities at the Alexandra Park cricket clubhouse and grounds as part of a project with Heartlands High School.
  - ii. That Phase 2 was a concern to the Committees and proper consultation with the local community and the Committees was recommended including extensive plans on the scale and size of the all-weather practice area and full details about the proposed floodlighting.
- 11.4 The following specific concerns were raised by the committees:
- the potential damage to the local habitats,
  - the floodlighting so close to a conservation area,
  - the potential loss of established trees,
  - replacement of grass with paving, the potential detrimental visual affect of the all-weather practice area.
- 11.5 The team have also consulted the borough's nature conservation officer and the Park Manager.
- 11.6 The Friends of Alexandra Park also made a written submission in relation to phase 1. They raised their concerns about possible damage to wildlife habitat associated with drainage work on the perimeter ditch. While recognising the need for work to ensure that the ditch has the required capacity, they point out that the bushes and small trees which line the ditch provide valuable habitat for plants, birds and insects. They would like assurance that disturbance along the ditch is kept to a minimum when the drainage work is carried out. They would find it wholly unacceptable for any of the bushes and trees to be removed, for example to allow access for large earth moving plant.

- 11.7 A representative of the Alexandra Park Ornithological Group also attended the site visit. The group submitted a representation letter which raised several concerns. The major concern was that the phase 2 works would result in destruction of parts of the 'cricket scrub', a bank of elm trees in particular, which are an important habitat to nesting and migratory birds.
- 11.8 In addition the group feel to the conservation gain of additional standing water would be worthless if the work results in habitat loss through the destruction of parts of the tree and bush cover alongside the ditch.

## **12. Recommendations**

- 12.1 That the Board considers the advice of the Alexandra Park and Palace Advisory Committee and decide whether to accept or reject that advice.
- 12.2 That the Board decide whether to grant permission for Phase 1 of the development, subject to planning permission and,
- 12.3 That the Board agree to the Alexandra Park Club sub-letting to Heartlands High School, by the mechanism of a surrender of the existing lease and grant of a new one.
- 12.4 That the Board delegates to the Interim General Manager, authority to agree final terms for the new Lease to Alexandra Park Club and that the agreement is subject to a satisfactory section 36 Charities Act report, which will be reported to the Board in due course.
- 12.5 That the London Borough of Haringey's Head of Legal Services be authorised by the Board as Trustees to seal the finalised Lease.
- 12.6 That the Board note that with regard to Phase 2, the Building Schools for the Future team will carry out further consultation with local residents and undertake appropriate wildlife and habitat surveys before requesting formal permission.

## **13. Legal Implications**

- 13.1 The Trust solicitor's advice has been taken into account in the preparation of the report.
- 13.2 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and in noting that the proposed use by Heartlands High School will not conflict with the overriding recreational use of the Palace and Park, has no comments on the proposals contained in this report, conditional upon any new lease terms being consistent with the permitted use to which the Palace and Park may be put.

#### **14. Financial Implications**

- 14.1 The London Borough of Haringey's Chief Financial Officer has no comments on the contents of this report.
  
- 14.2 The capital improvements are being made at no cost to the Trust beyond officer time. The BSF team has undertaken to pay the Trust's professional fees.
  
- 14.3 Alexandra Park Club will benefit economically from the proposals and they will also help develop the team spirit and sense of belonging for members. An active and healthy club will be able to continue contributing to the social and economic well-being of the park and palace.
  
- 14.4 The capital improvements are likely to result in an increased in rental value on review.

#### **15. Use of Appendices/Tables/Photographs**

Appendix 1: Location plan

Appendix 2: BSF project documents



# Appendix 1: Location Plan

